

Members from western States, like mine, will fight fiercely to keep these jobs because the West cannot survive off tourism alone.

I have a chart here that shows the relative wages in the mining industry. We have had hearings about the evolving West and what they hope the West looks like, but we in the West want these good, high-paying union jobs that exist now in the mines. The jobs in tourism do not pay nearly as much. That is what we are fighting for today.

By making mining in the U.S. uneconomic, the chairman's bill will give competitive advantage to countries like China and India. We Members who like the U.S. being number one and who don't like the current value of the dollar are fighting against that. I favor American exceptionalism.

By making mining in the U.S. uneconomic, the chairman's bill will compromise the readiness of our military because the military will have to further import the strategic minerals and materials it needs from hostile nations. It would be a sick twist of fate if the U.S. had to start importing uranium from Iran.

In order to defend the bill against job loss, the economic security and military security, you are going to hear some rhetoric that simply amounts to whoppers, the whoppers about the 1872 mining law on the House floor today, and I think it is important to set the record straight.

First, you will hear the law was passed in 1872, and at 135 years old it needs modernizing. I wonder where the chairman is when it comes time to modernize Yellowstone National Park, which was also created in that same year. But I will tell you that the chairman would be the first to argue against any changes in the acts that created our national parks, and Yellowstone in particular. Maybe the leaders back then believed that we needed to protect areas, but we also needed to use some of our lands to supply the materials for a growing Nation, because they understood we needed those materials. Maybe our politicians of today do not care if America's economy grows or not.

Secondly, you will hear that the law allows public lands to be purchased for \$2.50 an acre, the "price of a snack," I think were the words that were used. And yet I do not see any of our people in this Chamber or across the Nation standing up to say let me have some of that land for \$2.50 an acre. Because the truth is that you have to mine that land to get it for \$2.50 an acre. Maybe it is just not that easy to prove up on the mineral assets, on the mineral claims, as the chairman caused us to believe here.

Third, you will hear that energy companies pay 12 percent or more in royalties for coal, oil and gas on Federal lands; mineral mining companies don't.

Now, that seems fair, doesn't it? But you have to understand that many of

our energy companies also tried to buy mining claims and tried to do mining, and they gave up on it because they simply could not do it. They did not have the economics right. They didn't understand how to do it. And no more than you and I can buy a claim for \$2.50 and make a mining claim work, even our biggest oil companies could not do it. And these are the kinds of misinformation points that we are asked to believe today on the floor of the House of Representatives.

I tell you, please, my friends, do not believe it, because we are about to export these jobs, these good high-paying jobs. We are going to export jobs.

Fourth, you are going to hear that the Mining Law needs modern environmental laws. The mining industry today is well regulated. The mining industry itself, the BLM, the regulatory agencies used to have mines that looked like this top chart; and this mine under current law, under current environmental regulations, has now looked like this. We had testimony to this in our committee, but the majority just decided that they didn't need to listen to what is going on already. They wanted to create new overlapping legislation.

Currently, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and all other Federal regulations apply to the mining industry. But you would believe, if you heard our friends on the other side of the aisle, that we are simply out here digging holes in the ground and we are polluting the streams with no oversight. It is just not true.

So, my friends, as we engage in this argument, listen to the passion from the West, because you will know that our jobs are at stake, our livelihoods are at stake. There are people who want to make the West simply the vacation ground for the rest of the country. And I am saying from the West, we just want jobs, good jobs. We want not only jobs, but careers for our families. We want careers for our kids. And the legislation today here is designed to take away the careers from the West.

Look at it very carefully, because today the stock market is plunging amid fears of high energy prices and unavailable access, no access to drilling lands to increase the supply; and our dollar is falling because the world believes that we are going to give away our economy.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER).

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate my friend, the gentleman from West Virginia, on his legislation that substantially reforms the governance of hardrock mining on public lands.

Abandoned mine sites pose serious environmental and safety hazards. Currently, there are more than 80 hardrock abandoned mines or mine-re-

lated sites on the EPA's Superfund National Priorities List. Polluters should pay to clean up the pollution they leave behind.

I would like to have a colloquy with the gentleman from West Virginia to clarify the use of federally appropriated funds from the Hardrock Reclamation Account under sections 411, 412 and 413 of the bill.

Does the gentleman from West Virginia agree that moneys in the Hardrock Reclamation Account shall not be provided in a manner that reduces the financial responsibilities of any party that is responsible or potentially responsible for contamination on any real property?

Mr. RAHALL. Yes.

Mr. WEINER. Does the gentleman also agree that the provision of assistance pursuant to this act or section shall not in any way relieve any part of liability with respect to such contamination, including liability for removal and remediation costs?

Mr. RAHALL. Yes.

Mr. WEINER. I thank the chairman. I urge passage of this bill.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, I include for the RECORD at this point a letter to me from Chairman JOHN DINGELL of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and a letter in response from myself to Chairman DINGELL of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
Washington, DC, October 29, 2007.

Hon. NICK J. RAHALL II,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write with regard to H.R. 2262, the "Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2007". I know it is your wish for the bill to be considered on the House floor as soon as possible.

Some of the provisions in the bill establish requirements for the Environmental Protection Agency and concern the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980. Those provisions are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. I am not, however, raising the issue with the Speaker because it is my understanding that you have agreed that the referral and consideration of the bill do not in any way serve as a jurisdictional precedent as to our two committees.

Further, as to any conference on the bill, the Committee on Energy and Commerce reserves the right to seek the appointment of conferees for consideration of any portions of the bill that are within the Committee's jurisdiction. It is my understanding that you have agreed to support a request by the Committee with respect to serving as conferees on the bill (or similar legislation).

I request that you send to me a letter confirming our agreements and that our exchange of letters be inserted in the Congressional Record as part of the consideration of the bill.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

JOHN D. DINGELL,
Chairman.